

A MOVE TO MOODLE: A PERSPECTIVE OF ACADEMICS IN THE COLLEGE OF INTERNATIONAL TOURISM AND HOSPITALITY MANAGEMENT

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed to present the usage of MOODLE among faculty members and students of the College of International Tourism and Hospitality Management (CITHM) of the Lyceum of the Philippines University – Laguna (LPU-L). Data were gathered from 9 faculty members and 123 students of CITHM during the first semester of academic year 2014-2015 using a researcher-made questionnaire. Results of the study show the significant role played by using MOODLE as a supplementary mode of lesson delivery. There is high utilization of MOODLE among faculty members and students of the College. The features and modules commonly used are the uploading of lessons, activities, assignments and resources. Hindrances in its use include poor internet connection and lack of knowledge of MOODLE use on the part of the faculty.

Keywords: *MOODLE, academics, features, modules, lesson.*

INTRODUCTION

Higher Education Institutions (HEI), like the College of International Tourism and Hospitality Management (CITHM), necessitates a cost effective and viable online Learning Management System (LMS) which can exhaust the possibilities of learning and teaching experiences of participants, and at the same time, minimizes the development and operation cost (Sarker, et.al.,

2013). There are a number of commercial proprietary learning management systems available, but unlike them, Moodle excels as an open-source, cost-effective and community supported LMS solution. This paper discusses the effectiveness of Moodle as reinforcement to the traditional teaching methods currently used by CITHM as well as to understand the staffs' perception on the online learning environment. This is not about general Moodle development challenges, but rather, the researchers and institution's points of view on the challenges of managing Moodle.

Information and Communication Technology (ICT) is used to strengthen the pedagogical skills and fortify teaching and learning across all areas of the curriculum done in a classroom set-up (Bate, 2010). It is possible if a well-balanced approach to integrating technology, pedagogy and content exist in order to deliver an effective learning environment for learners (Koh & Chai, 2011). Evident to the vision and mission of Lyceum of the Philippines – Laguna (LPU-L), it is a commitment to produce whole-rounded students. In order to do that, learners need opportunities to work with technology so as to gain the knowledge and assurance they need as well as to provide them with the skills necessary in becoming 'experts' in their chosen fields. To realize this, it obliges teachers/trainers to have a good grasp of how ICTs can be used and the skills to incorporate it into learning and teaching (AITSL, 2012). Trainers who are equipped with strong combination of ICT skills and pedagogical knowledge are prepared to "effectively use today's technologies in the classroom as well as continue to develop and adapt to new technologies that emerge in the future" (Gill & Dalgarno 2008).

E-learning and its impacts have become an essential aspect of teaching and learning (Stein, 2011). LPU-L started to adopt the use of Moodle version 2.0 since the second semester of the academic year 2010 -

2011. The introduction of Moodle in the contemporary teaching methods provides the academe an alley to improve the services it brings to its customers. It is highly stressed that the implementation of Moodle is not a technical migration from an old system to a new one, but rather, an opportunity for the University to transform the incumbent model of teaching.

With the emergence of sound technology and tools in promoting computer teaching and distance learning, the Course Management System (CMS) or Virtual Learning Experience (VLE) is created. Moodle is a free, open-source software package designed using comprehensive pedagogical principles, to help trainers create effective online learning communities. The ratio of scope Moodle can encompass from the number of teachers versus the number of students can be as dramatic as 1:200,000. "Moodle has already become a term of its own synonymous with a software package designed to help educators create quality online instruction. It was the brainchild of Martin Dougiamas. It is designed to help educators create quality online instruction" (Brandle,2005,p.16). Besides, Moodle is used interchangeably as a Learning Management System (LMS).

The current version of Moodle Online Learning used in LPU-Laguna was developed by William Rice in 2006. Over half a million registered users are on this site alone, speaking over 75 languages in 193 countries and still growing, make Moodle a large and diverse user community (Rice, 2006). This gives the teacher a chance to create potent, supple, and engaging online learning experiences. Moodle's name gives awareness into its approach to e-learning. From the official Moodle documentation: Moodle is an acronym for Modular Object-Oriented Dynamic Learning Environment used by programmers and education theorists in building an active learning environment, and highlighting student-to-student and student-to-teacher interactions.

Several research studies have proven that the integration of Moodle or (LMS) in the education culture enhances learning beyond the classroom for both teachers and learners (de Vega & McAnally-Salas, 2010; Govender, 2009; Georgouli, Skalkidis & Guerreiro 2008; Harman, 2007; Henderson 2010). In addition, it is established that blended learning takes place when Moodle or a LMS is installed. Moreover, the application of Moodle or LMS which was built on the Sociocultural-Constructivist Learning Model of Melton in 2008, believed to foster a student-centered approach where students and instructors are both engaged and active in the classroom that use constructive learning activities.

Moodle can be used to integrate a course with online activities that both teachers and learners can use to increase the efficacy of learning and competence in ICT. Most courses in higher education institutions are supported by textbooks that provide plenty of teaching aides and materials like audio-cassettes, CDs and even CD-ROMs, but students seem quite reluctant to the use of these tools. The assimilation of Moodle and e-learning to the traditional teaching environment proves to enrich the learning process through a more complete exploration of the teaching resources, contents and other materials as aids to the textbook chosen.

Moodle also enhances student autonomy. Students can access web-based media, and files uploaded/downloaded by their teachers including textbook materials, quizzes and other supplementary learning tools; communicate and interact with teachers and other students on the web; and download materials for portable learning devices such as iPods and MP3 players.

On the other hand, teachers can obtain information about students through profiles posted to the site; upload or download lesson plans,

handouts and other course materials; track and assess students' progress; assign blogs, forums and other interactive activities for homework; disseminate information about the course not mentioned during class; and post reminders about exams and term papers.

“Moodle showed a great potential for supporting conventional classroom instruction” (Brandl, 2005). Moodle has forums which are best for the course practice and interactions as they leave written record. They work very well for identifying individual students' error patterns and knowledge retention as well. For learners who have low-level of confidence or accuracy in the target topic, the use of the forum is a good choice to help them plan a conversation without scaffold. For learners at higher levels, greater forums for higher level of practice can be exploited.

The rationale behind is the core pedagogical principle of Social Constructivism which stresses that a social group constructs learning for one another collaboratively. It is also a learning theory wherein educators and students conjointly explore, inquire, critique, and build their own knowledge effectively and efficiently (Lasic, 2011). This research tackles the general observation and its adoption of Moodle in teaching and education. It also focuses on the effectiveness of the use of Moodle in a student-centered teaching approach practiced by CITHM.

Research Framework

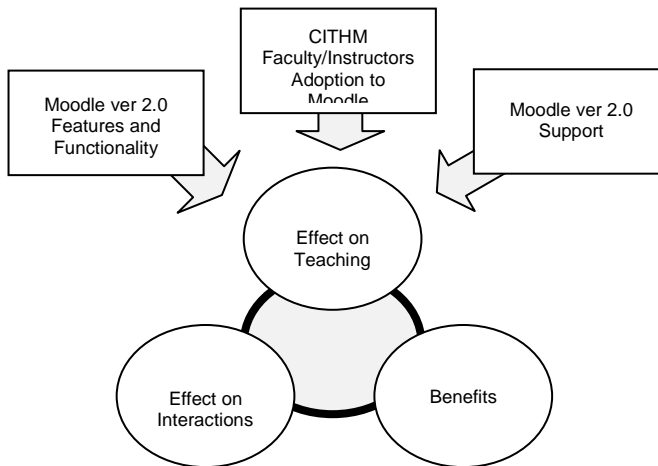


Figure 1. Research conceptual framework

Figure 1 shows the research conceptual framework wherein the adoption of the CITHM faculty members and instructors, with the use of Moodle as reinforcement for their teaching approaches, has effects on teaching and interactions among learners and trainers. The research framework was conceptualized based on theory, literature review and findings that identified Moodle as an effective e-learning software for learning management, promoting interactions and collaboration among educators, students and the course content.

Objectives of the Study

This study aimed to present the usage of MOODLE among faculty members and students of the CITHM. Specifically, it aimed to

- determine the level of use and effectiveness of Moodle;

- identify the MOODLE features commonly used by the faculty;
- recognize staff perceptions and discernments of the online learning environment; and
- gauge the types of support needed for the effective digital delivery of learning resources.

Significance of the Study

This study provides information that may encourage CITHM faculty members to utilize Moodle so as to improve the quality of teaching and augment student learning feats. It may raise awareness among faculty members on the benefits of teaching in an online environment as it blends to the conventional face-to-face classroom scenario and its effectiveness on student learning achievements. The study findings will be beneficial in helping with decision making on determining the need for transforming the learning environment from the orthodox way of teaching to blended learning in higher education.

This research also contributes to the relevant knowledge on ICT acceptance among teachers as well as their teaching progress in the CITHM context. It helps in creating opportunities by allowing the faculty to participate and share ideas with their peers and their students at the University. It will also assists instructors, lecturers and management to monitor students' achievement when it comes to Moodle usage.

METHOD

The research was conducted in Lyceum of the Philippines University – Laguna, particularly in the College of International Tourism and Hospitality Management, as part of the college's thrust to fulfil the school's Institutional

Quality Objectives (IQO). The probing of the benefits and effects of Moodle to the teaching and interactions in other colleges of LPU – Laguna will not be part of this paper.

Data were gathered from 9 faculty members and 123 students of CITHM during the first semester of academic year 2014-2015. The student respondents were distributed among the four year levels, most of whom came from the fourth year level (40%), while the least came from the first year level (11%). Majority of the student respondents (59%) are female.

Data were gathered using a researcher made questionnaire which elicits information on the level of use with the features, tools and modules of MOODLE commonly utilized by the respondent faculty members and students. It also covered the hindrances encountered in the use of MOODLE. The questionnaire contains a combination of checklist, ranking and a 5-point Likert scale.

Data were tabulated in frequency distribution tables and weighted means summarized the responses in the Likert scale.

Profile of the respondents

The following tables show the distribution of the respondents according to their profile. Table 1 shows an equal number of faculty members with age ranging from 21 to 35. Table 2 shows more of the student respondents coming from the third and fourth year levels. Table 3 shows more female faculty members (55.6%) and students (59.3%) than male respondents. Majority of the faculty members (55.5%) have BS degree.

Table 1. Distribution of faculty members according to age

Age	Frequency	Percent
21	1	11.1
25	2	22.2
27	2	22.2
28	2	22.2
35	2	22.2
Total	9	100

Table 2. Distribution of students by year level

Student's Year Level	Frequency	Percent
1	14	11.38
2	28	22.76
3	32	26.02
4	49	39.84
Total	123	100

Table 3. Distribution of the respondents according to gender

Gender	Faculty		Student	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Male	4	44.4	50	40.7
Female	5	55.6	73	59.3
Total	9	100	9	100

Table 4. Distribution of the faculty members according to educational qualification

Education	Frequency	Percent
BS degree	5	55.5
MA/MS degree	4	44.4
Total	9	100

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Level of use and effectiveness of MOODLE

Majority (6 out of 9) of the faculty have a familiarity scale of more than 5 on a scale of 10. All faculty members except the newly hired had been using MOODLE in their teaching and they have moderate to much level of confidence in using MOODLE and they would advise other faculty members to use Moodle as a supplementary way of delivering the lessons, since it could still not replace face to face teaching. MOODLE is utilized in most of the major courses offered in the College such as Culinary, Cruiseline and Tourism Management courses except in Baking and Front Office lessons since these require more hands on training.

Among students, the level of use of MOODLE ranges from one semester to eight semesters. This covers the year level of the students and courses in which they are enrolled. Most of the students (22%) had used MOODLE for five semesters. The students utilize MOODLE in the following courses: Communication Arts, Environmental Science, Events Management, Financial Management, Front Office, Filipino, Hotel Facilities Planning, ICT, History, Restaurant Management, Statistics and Western Cuisine.

Majority of the students (93 of 123, 76%) have familiarity level of more than 5 on a scale of 10, while 71% (87 of 123) have more than 5 level extent of use of MOODLE. Students also agree that MOODLE could not replace face to face teaching as responded by 68% of the respondents but 72% still would recommend the use of MOODLE in the teaching-learning process.

Table 5. Length of use of MOODLE

Number of semesters of use	Faculty Frequency	Percent	Student Frequency	Percent
1	2	22.3	13	10.6
2			8	6.5
3			11	8.9
4	3	33.3	8	6.5
5	4	44.4	27	22.0
6			10	8.1
7			16	13.0
8			6	4.9
No response			24	19.5
Total	9	100	123	100.0

MOODLE features, modules and tools faculty and students use

Of the MOODLE features, the faculty are mostly using the features: add resource, add an activity and edit settings (7 of 9, 78%), messaging (67%), add/edit courses and editing profile (56%). Other features used are: grading (44%), enrolment methods (33%), user accounts and permissions (22%), identifying and switching roles and blogs (11%).

Table 6. Features of MOODLE faculty members used

Features	Faculty Frequency	Percent
Edit settings	7	78
adding resource	7	78
adding an activity	7	78
messaging	6	67
adding/editing courses	5	56
editing profile	5	56
grading	4	44
enrolment methods	3	33
user accounts and permissions	2	22
switching roles	1	11
roles	1	11
Blogs	1	11

The modules commonly used by both faculty and students are lesson and assignment. Day to day topics and lectures are the usual uploaded materials in MOODLE that are viewed and used by the students. The assignments are also provided through MOODLE. Short quizzes are also done. Resources and other reference materials are also viewed. A few classes have forum and chat and surveys are sometimes being conducted.

Table 7. Modules in MOODLE faculty and students used

Faculty Modules	Mean	Student Modules	Mean
survey	4.20	Chat	3.86
chat	4.00	Workshop	3.62
quiz	3.86	Forum	3.56
forum	3.71	Wiki	3.47
workshop	3.50	Survey	3.27
wiki	3.25	Resource	3.08
resource	2.71	Quiz	2.90
lesson	2.00	Assignment	2.21
Assignment	1.88	Lesson	2.17

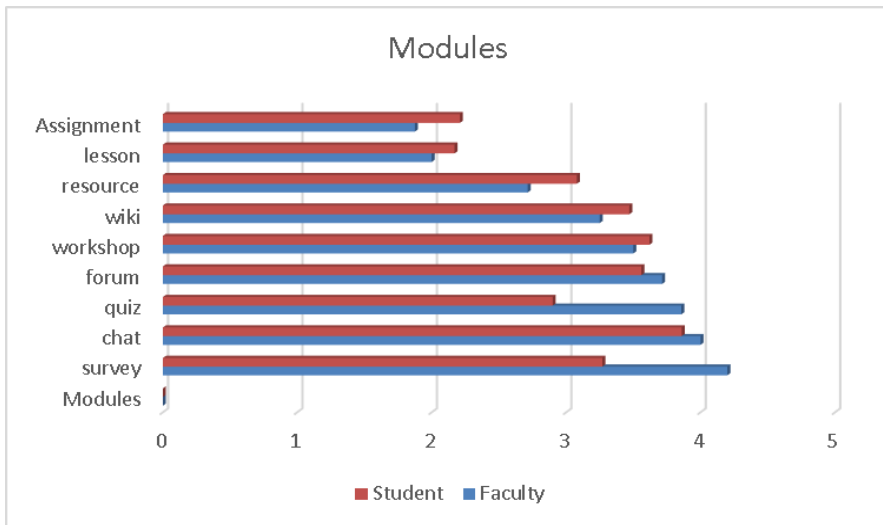


Figure 2. Modules in MOODLE

Table 8. Tools in MOODLE used in the lesson

Faculty Tools for the lesson	Mean	Student Tools	Mean
news	4.25	chat	3.93
chat	3.88	news	3.34
discussions	2.63	discussions	2.76
Learning	2.38	Learning	2.30
Assignments	1.88	Assignments	2.16

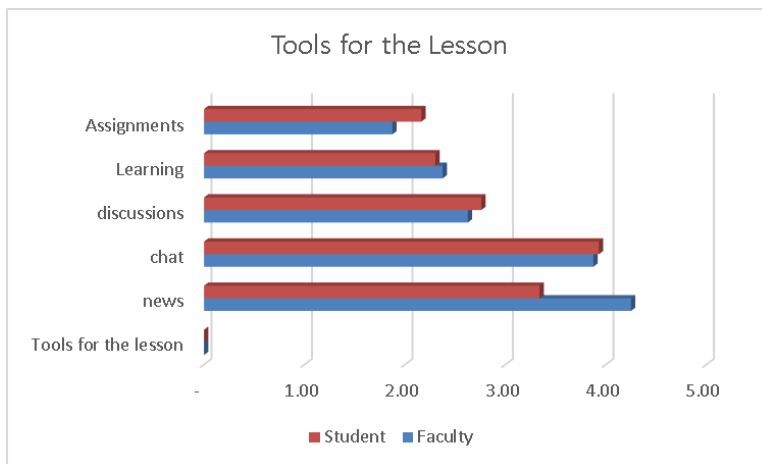


Figure 3. Tools for the lesson used

MOODLE had been instrumental in the delivery of the lessons in class. As Dougimas stated, it is designed to create quality online instruction (Brandle, 2005). The respondents noted that in MOODLE, lessons, activities and announcements are being posted. Likewise, assessment and evaluation of submitted requirements are graded and are seen in the roster.

Table 9. Tools used in teaching

Tools in Teaching	Faculty Mean	Tools in Teaching	Student Mean
mail	4.57	Mail	3.51
calendar	4.33	roster	3.44
roster	4.33	calendar	3.29
gradebook	4.00	gradebook	3.19
assessments	2.43	announcements	3.04
announcements	2.43	assessments	2.89
Activity	2.25	Activity	2.12
lesson upload	2.13	lesson upload	2.06

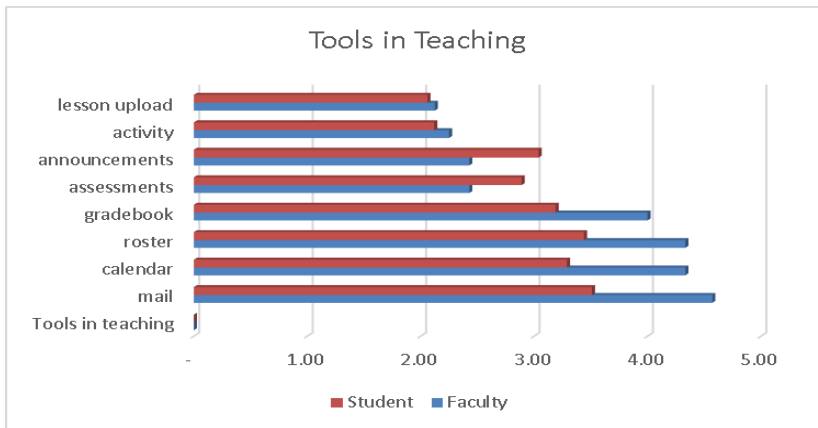


Figure 4. Tools used in teaching

Advantages and benefits of using MOODLE

Results of the survey shows the many advantages of using MOODLE as a supplementary mode of lesson delivery. Both faculty and students can easily go back and retrieve posted lessons anytime they need it. /this same observation was supported by Perkins and Pfaffman (2006)

who mentioned less effort to be done in posting assignments, lesson plans and announcements. Because of the online nature of MOODLE, access to all materials posted on it is enhanced. For students, submission of requirements can be done on time using MOODLE. The students can still learn even without face to face meeting with the teacher and they can participate in discussion whenever forums are available. Although some students claimed that there is dependence on the class and the teacher, some of them did not agree on these. Both faculty and students mentioned that there is improved performance when blended learning using MOODLE is done. This result is in consonance with the claim of Lopez-Perez, et al (2011) that marks of students improved because of its constructive effect.

Table 10. Advantages of using MOODLE

Advantages of using Moodle	Faculty Mean	Advantages of using Moodle	Student Mean
can go back to the posted lesson	4.22	submit requirements on time	4.04
interact more	3.88	can go back to the posted lesson	4.00
submit requirements on time	3.56	can learn even without face to face meeting with teacher	3.71
can learn even without face to face meeting with teacher	3.56	improved performance	3.53
participate in discussion	3.22	participate in discussion	3.51
improved performance	3.22	interact more	3.40
became more dependent on his/her class	3.22	became more dependent on the teacher	3.08
became more lazy	3.11	became more dependent on his/her classmates	3.01
became more dependent on the teacher	3.11	became more lazy	2.79

Utilizing MOODLE saves teacher's time in lesson preparation. The posted course materials can be retrieved from the existing files and carried over to the semester where the material is needed. As such, more time is devoted to

interaction with students and quality discussions. The students also noted that the teaching quality improves with the use of MOODLE.

Table 11. Benefits of using MOODLE

Benefits of using MOODLE	Faculty Mean	Benefits of using MOODLE	Student Mean
saves me time in my teaching preparation	3.71	it is easy to access lessons	3.87
it is easy to revise lessons	3.71	learn new things	3.86
get support from colleagues and immediate head	3.71	improves my learning	3.79
improves quality of my teaching	3.63	saves me time in my studying	3.65
saves me time in my teaching preparation	3.63	increase interaction with my teacher/s	3.59
increase quality of interaction with students	3.50	feel more connected	3.58
motivates the students to learn	3.50	motivates me to learn	3.54
increase interaction with students	3.25	get support from teachers and classmates	3.50
		increase quality of interaction with my teachers	3.49

Challenges in Using MOODLE

The foremost challenge in adopting MOODLE as a supplement to teaching and learning is internet connection. Both faculty and students mention this as the topmost challenge. It is also mentioned that there is lack of technical support coming from those that maintain the program. As cited by Hueros (2010), technical support directly professed effectiveness.

Majority (7 out of 9) of the faculty still have difficulty in using MOODLE. They mentioned lack of knowledge in MOODLE and some computer applications. The faculty needs more training than the students. Hueros (2010) deduced Moodle is directly affected by perceived ease of utility. For some faculty members, who has limited knowledge on MOODLE,

time for access and preparation preparation of materials pose difficulty. It is also noted that the students are more abreast with the utilization of MOODLE compared to the faculty. Most of the identified hindrances are high for the faculty but not for the students.

Faculty needs a re-orientation and more familiarization on MOODLE. Tutorial lessons on MOODLE which will cover how to upload files, videos and pictures are required. A MOODLE manual and/or an audio-visual presentation on how to use MOODLE is requested.

Table 12. Hindrances in using MOODLE

Hindrances	Faculty Percent	Student Percent
Internet connection	100	71
lack of technical support	89	26
lack of knowledge in Moodle	78	32
need for more training	56	20
lack of knowledge in computer	33	18
lack of support from colleagues	22	25
lack of time for preparation of materials	22	-
lack of time to access the site	-	47

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Results of the study show the significant role played by using MOODLE as a supplementary mode of lesson delivery. There is high utilization of MOODLE among faculty members and students of the College of International Tourism and Hospitality Management. The features and modules commonly used are the uploading of lessons, activities, assignments and resources. The use of MOODLE provides more interaction with students and improved student performance. There are however, some

limitations on its use due to internet connection and lack of knowledge on the part of the faculty. It is therefore recommended that continuous technical training be conducted for the faculty to facilitate the utilization of MOODLE. It is highly recommended that internet connection be improved to maximize the full potential of using MOODLE in all courses.

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